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Weekly Newspaper of the Year 2011

Wednesday, July 20, 2011

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Olympic working party is binned

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Rain can't dampen spirits at festival

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Dale Farm travellers claim public body 'is on their side'

Sam Smith

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SECRET talks have been held between the chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the borough council and travellers who are facing eviction from Europe's largest illegal gypsysite Dale Farm.

The discussions were cited as being "independent" by the leader of Basildon Borough Council Tony Ball. However, the travellers have claimed that Trevor Phillips, the chairman of the commission, is on their side.

## Representatives

Mr Phillips travelled to Dale Farm, in Crays Hill, on Monday morning along with Simon Woolley, a commissioner for the EHRC. They later met with Mr Ball and representatives of the "settled committy", although the itinerary was kept a closely guarded secret. Richard Sheridan, the president of the Gypsy Council, accompanied Mr Phillips around Dale Farm, where 86 traveller families who live on the green belt site without planning permission are expected to be



evicted in September in an operation that could cost the taxpayer up to £18 million.

"I believe he [Mr Phillips] is on our side," said Mr Sheridan. "He wants to take the adult approach. He would like to see the children going to school every morning."

Mr Sheridan, 40, described Mr Phillips, who was appointed EHRC chair in September 2006, as a "genuine and nice person".

"At the end of the day we are an ethnic minority and we have human rights," Mr Sheridan said.

"He is going to make sure our

rights are addressed."
Mr Ball, however, rejected claims
that Mr Phillips is on the side of the
travellers.
He said: "They are independent,
they came with a view that if they
can help avoid a forced eviction,

# Pair pose as police for triple

THIEVES fooled their victims into letting them into their homes by dressing up as policemen.

Two men wearing black jackets with "Police" written on them flashed take warrants to get into homes in Wickford. Once they had duped the homeowners into letting them in, they stole hundreds of pounds before fleeing.

The pair first struck at a house in Arundel Road in Wickford at 12.40pm on Saturday.

After speaking to the family, they managed to sfeal £30.

They struck again half an hour later in the Southend Road area, where they stole an estimated £200.

On their third attempt, they tried to steal from a house in Victoria Road in Laindon.

## Suspicious

Suspicious

However, their target became suspicious and refused to let them in, and they left empty-handed. Investigating officer DS Wayne Hickey said: "In the first two incidents, the suspects quickly flashed they claimed to be their warrant card, but the victims did not get a good look at it. "All three happened within a small area and within an hour of the first being reported, so we believe that they are linked.

"Police officers will always produce a warrant card or be in full police uniform and when in doubt you should ask to see them properly."

One of the suspects had a receding hairline and was 5ft 9in tall, while the other was 6ft 2in tall with a beer belly. Both were white and between 21 and 40 years old.

Anyone with information should call 6300 333 4444, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 800 555 111.

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FURZE HILL

# Billericay Town Council blamed the action on uninspired public

News

# Olympic group has disbanded after lack of interest

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Sam. Simulwigacture levision.

A WORKING party formed to help Billericay benefit from the Olympic Games next year has been disbanded due to a "lack of interest" from local groups.

Billericay Town Council had formed an Olympic working party in April this year to consult local organisations on how the town could benefit from London 2012.

2012.

After just three months, however, the group has been broken up, with town councillors blaming a lack of interest.

broken tip, with rown councilors blaming a lack of interest.

Mark

As it stands, Billericay is not set to mark the Games in any way.

Town councillor Jim Devlin, chairman of the finance and general purposes committee, said the authority consulted a number of local organisations but did not receive any positive feedback.

"If no one wants to participate there is no point trying to facilitate nobody," he said.

One idea put forward was to open up school fields for people to camp in during the sporting spectacle. Jonathan Rowlands, assistant head teacher at Mayflower High School, confirmed the school was approached by the town council as regards letting out its fields for camping, but said

the school had "reservations" about doing so, as the fields are used by summer activity groups. "We can't do anything as we don't own any land," Cllr Devlin added.

added.
"Staging events would be expensive, so it was a case of us encouraging people and it didn't appear anyone was interested."
However, the town council's accusation of a lack of interest among local groups has received an angry rebuke from Trevor Draper, the chairman of the Billericay Chamber of Commerce.

Not fussed

The chamber was cited by Cllr Devin as one group which "was not fussed" about the Games.

But in response, Mr Draper accused the town council of not acting soon enough to enable the town to benefit from the event.

Mr Draper said: "It is not that we have a lack of interest or didn't want to be involved to try to develop the potential, the council left it too late.

Thave always been in favour of supporting anything that brings people to our town.

"The fact the council was unwilling in the last two-and-a-half years to get their act together is not my problem. It is sad they should point the finger at anyone else other than themselves."



NO INTEREST: The town council has disbanded its Olympics working party

formed
■ January 2004: Bid
officially launched at
Covent Garden. An
applicant's questionnaire is
sent to the International
Olympic Committee (IOC)
■ May 2004: IOC puts
London, Madrid, Moscow,
New York and Paris on a
shortlist. Lord Sebastian
Coe becomes chairman of

the bid company

May-November 2004:
Candidate file is put
together, detailing how the
Games will be staged

July 6, 2005: Delegation travels to Singapore to make its final presentation. Members of the IOC vote in

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### In brief

# Revamped skate park to be reopened

park to be reopened
BILLERICAY: The official
opening of the town's revamped
skate park takes place on
Saturday.
There will be demonstrations
and competitions between
midday and 4pm at the facility in
Lake Meadows Park.
Refreshments will be provided
by Rico Maza, the new owner of
the park's cafe.
The opening will cost the town
council about 2300, with funds
also being provided by Essex
County Council.
Members of the Billericay
Youth Town Council will be
filming the event as part of a
DVD to be sent to Billericay's
twin town of Fishers, in the US
state of Indiana.

MP slams Murdoch

## **MP slams Murdoch**

BILLERICAY: The town's MP John Baron has welcomed the announcement that Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation has withdrawn its bid for the broadcaster BSkyB in the wake of the phone hacking allegations which forced the News of the World to close.

Mr Baron said: "Given the revelations, particularly about phone hacking interfering with police investigations, it cannot be right to allow News Corporation to take control of BSkyB. I welcome the news that the bid has been withdrawn."

He added: "The tabloids may be under increasing pressure when trying to compete with the internet, but this can be no excuse for practices which are both illegal and ethically wrong." BILLERICAY: The town's MP

## Games bid timeline

■ 2003: The bid team is

February 2005: IOC's
Evaluation Committee visit
London to inspect plans
February-July 2005:
London 2012 team works
on the final bid
presentation and public
support reaches 75 per

Members of the 100 volumes secret IOC president Jacques Rogge announces London as the 2012 host, winning by 54 votes to 50

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## **Human rights chief in secret** talks with Dale Farm gypsies

From page 1

they will do what they can to help."
Clir Ball met with Mr Phillips and
Crays Hill residents at the Basildon
Centre on Monday afternoon.
"It is the first time they have

"It is the first time they have listened to representatives from the settled community as well as the trav-ellers," added Cllr Ball. "If they have got anything they can do, they will come up with some pro-treals."

do, they will come up with some prosals."
A 2009 commission report regarding the inequalities experienced by traveller communities stated: "The continuing cycle of evictions associated with homelessness among caravan-dwelling gypsies and travellers is a shameful blot on the face of Britain."

It opes on to read: Trish travellers



MEETINGS: Tony Ball leader of Basildon Borough Council

man for his commission said: "It is in containing cycle of evictions associated with homelessness among
caravan-dwelling gypsies and travellers is a shameful blot on the face of
Britian."

It goes on to read: "Irish travellers
currently at Dale Farm..experience
the full weight of hostile political
power, despite valiant legal and community struggles."

Mr Phillips declined to speak to the
Gazette in person. However, a spokes-